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**ECONOMIC BLACKOUT ON  
FEBRUARY 28, 2025  
12:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.  
TAKE PART & SHARE THE NEWS**

If you haven't heard, there will be a nationwide economic blackout on Friday, February 28. This means don't buy ANYTHING unless it's from a small, local business – NO gas, no fast food, and definitely No Amazon, No Walmart, No Target, and No Best Buy. Get the word out! We want THEM to see that WE have the power. We will start with 1 day, then 3, then specific companies until our message is heard.

**Please spread the word!  
Thank you!**

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Vol. 92, No. 7 • \$1.00 +CA. Sales Tax

"For Over Ninety Years The Voice of Our Community Speaking for Itself"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2025

# NNPA Launches National Public Education and Selective Buying Campaign



SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), representing the Black Press of America, has announced the planning and implementation of a national public education and selective buying campaign across the nation in direct response to those corporate entities that have dismantled their respective Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) commitments, programs, and staffing.

NNPA Chairman Emeritus Danny Bakewell Sr. explained, "Now is the time for the Black Press of America once again to emphatically speak and publish truth to power."

"We are the trusted voice of Black America, and we will not be silent or non-responsive to the rapid rise of renewed Jim Crow racist policies in corporate America," stated NNPA Chairman Bobby R. Henry Sr.

"The Black Press of America continues to remain on the frontline keeping our families and communities informed and engaged on all the issues that impact our quality of life."

At a recent convening of NNPA member publishers and editors, a united resolve was reached that each member publication of the NNPA will begin a national public education campaign coupled with the release of research data on those America companies that are engaging in efforts to sanction racial injustice, inequitable policies, divisive leadership, and economic apartheid in America.

"We note forthrightly that Black Americans spend \$2 trillion dollars annually as consumers of products and services throughout the United States," NNPA President **{See NNPA DEI EDUCATION CAMPAIGN on B-6}**

These are some of the companies that have publicly retreated from Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

COURTESY PHOTOS

## Tomiquia Moss Takes Helm as Secretary of Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency

**Sentinel Exclusive**

BY DANNY J. BAKEWELL, JR.  
Executive Editor and  
LILA BROWN  
Contributing Writer

Governor Gavin Newsom has appointed Tomiquia Moss as Secretary of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH), bringing in a leader with more

than 20 years of experience tackling housing and homelessness.

In an exclusive interview with the Los Angeles Sentinel, Moss shared her vision for addressing California's housing crisis and advancing economic security for Black and marginalized communities.

Moss has dedicated her career to public service and advocacy. Before assuming



E. MESIAH MCGINNIS/L.A. SENTINEL

Sentinel Contributing Writer Lila Brown and Executive Editor Danny J. Bakewell Jr interview the California Housing Secretary.

her current role, she was the founder and CEO of All Home, a Bay Area organization committed to breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Under her leadership, All Home created transformative regional housing and economic security plans suc-

cessfully advocated for state and local policy changes, and granted millions of dollars to nonprofit and government partners to prevent homelessness.

Moss's prior roles include serving as CEO of Hamilton Families, which provides emergency and

permanent housing solutions in San Francisco. She also worked as chief of staff for Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, as executive director of the HOPE SF Initiative under the late San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee, and as the founding project director of the San

Francisco Community Justice Center.

"My work has always centered on creating real solutions that directly impact the lives of people who are most in need," Moss told the Sentinel.

**{See TOMIQUA MOSS**



E. MESIAH MCGINNIS/L.A. SENTINEL

Tomiquia Moss

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Dr. Erycka Webb – see page A-4



Keith Manley – see page C-3

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"For Over Ninety Years The Voice of Our Community Speaking for Itself"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2025

# District Attorney Nathan Hochman Meets with Community Leaders

*Community leaders share their concerns and express their support of his efforts to create a better, stronger, and more inclusive Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.*



L.A. County District Attorney Nathan Hochman addresses Black community leaders meeting at the L.A. Sentinel office.

BY DANNY J. BAKEWELL, JR.  
Executive Editor

Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman has been on the job for roughly 65 days. In that short time, he has been involved with cracking down on sex trafficking, prosecuting people looting during the recent wildfires, and reviewing several cases where although convicted, the circumstances seem a little less than clear cut. Another priority has been to revamp, reorganize and re-energize an organization,

which as he puts it, "needs to refocus its priorities."

On Feb. 3 at a breakfast hosted by Los Angeles Sentinel Executive Publisher Danny J. Bakewell, Sr., several community leaders from business, community-based, and religious organizations came together to meet with District Attorney Hochman and some of his key staff in order to discuss his priorities and how he envisions working with those leaders in the Black community.

**{See D.A. HOCHMAN MEETS WITH LEADERS on B-7}**



From left are Sentinel Executive Publisher Danny J. Bakewell, Sr., D.A. Nathan Hochman, and Danny J. Bakewell, Jr.



From left are Danny J. Bakewell, Sr., Bryce Bakewell, D.A. Nathan Hochman, and former District Attorney Jackie Lacey.

## Prosperity Market's Farmer's Market Pop-Up Helps Fire Victims

*The mobile farmer's market celebrated their fourth anniversary bringing the community together to support one another.*

BY BRIAN W. CARTER  
Contributing Writer

On a bright, sunny, winter day, Prosperity Market (PM), the mobile farmers market, gathered a host of L.A.'s Black farmers, food producers, chefs, and entrepreneurs for a pop-up market

in the parking lot of Hilltop Coffee + Kitchen, located on Slauson, in View Park/Windsor Hills. The event was free to the public.

Featuring 35 Black-owned businesses, PM had originally planned to celebrate their fourth anniversary with an emphasis on Black

History Month. In the wake of the destructive wildfires in Los Angeles, the event served to honor the resilience of the L.A. community and provided resources for those affected.

"We thought about it for a little bit and we wanted to frame it as creating a



Featuring 35 Black-owned businesses, Prosperity Market's pop-up farmer's market celebrated the resilience of the L.A. community and provided resources for those affected.

moment of joy in challenging times for everyone," said Kara Still, co-owner of PM.

"There are so many people who reached out and they

were still excited about coming to see us and all of those things, so we said we wanted to create an opportunity for the community to come together."

Adriana Gasaway is the owner of Ace Naturals featuring soap and body butters she made to be gentler and healthier for skin. She shared

**{See PROSPERITY MARKET on B-7}**



Prosperity Market Co-Founder Kara Still talks with a patron

Sunday

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# Los Angeles Times

latimes.com

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2025

FEB 03 2025



## Feds raise releases at 2 dams in state

Trump orders huge boost, but California officials and water experts say the timing is wrong for farms.

BY IAN JAMES  
AND JESSICA GARRISON

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has dramatically increased the amount of water flowing from two dams in Tulare County, sending massive flows down river channels toward farmlands in the San Joaquin Valley.

Federal records show that water releases from Terminus Dam at Lake Kaweah and Schafer Dam at Lake Success jumped early Friday.

The sudden increase occurred four days after President Trump said on social media that the U.S. military had “entered” California and “TURNED ON THE WATER.”

Trump also vowed during a visit to Los Angeles last week to “open up the valves and pumps” in California to deliver more water.

According to federal data, the flow from Terminus Dam into the Kaweah River near Visalia increased from 57 cubic feet per second to more than 1,500 on Friday morning. The flow from Lake Success near Porterville into the Tule River increased from 105 cu-

## Escape from the Palisades

By Nathan Fenno, Melody Gutierrez and Paige St. John

The dirty brown smoke signaled trouble as it curled skyward near a popular hiking trail above Pacific Palisades on a breezy Tuesday morning in early January. ¶ A luxury real estate agent about to show a 7,200-square-foot mansion on West Sunset Boulevard wondered if a house up the hill had caught fire. A resident near the top of the stepped bluffs between the Santa Monica Mountains and the Pacific Ocean glanced briefly at the plume, then resumed pulling in trash cans as a garbage truck rumbled past. A mother running errands in posh Palisades Village watched the fire morph from back-of-the-mind concerning to all-out frightening before she rushed home. ¶ From backyard decks and breakfast tables, residents slowly realized this smokestack on the ridge wasn’t stopping.

Decades of warnings that the community’s three major roads were inadequate escape routes for thousands of people living in upper reaches of the Palisades proved prophetic. Streets were gridlocked at least 40 minutes before the first widespread evacuation order. As flames approached, firefighters and police told motorists to get out and run. The abandoned cars worsened the jam and prevented first responders from getting through. Residents trapped by blocked roads said they were forced to shelter in place. They wondered how — or if — they would escape.

The challenge of evacuating thousands of residents was compounded by delayed alerts and overwhelmed first responders. Residents told The Times they felt as if they were left to fend for themselves. But state leaders and fire officials assessing the evacuation that day said getting people out quickly was the primary focus.

Los Angeles city and county emergency man-

agement departments would provide no details of how they coordinated evacuation orders, or why repeated requests for an evacuation order by fire commanders at the scene were not immediately heeded.

Twelve deaths have been tied to the Palisades fire. More than 5,400 homes were destroyed. What was remarkable, to both residents and seasoned fire veterans, was that the snarled evacuation in one of the worst wildfires in modern California history did not take a greater toll.

This is the story of the first critical hours of that fire, when thousands of terrified residents had to decide whether and how to flee the inferno churning through hillsides and threatening their homes. Based on dozens of interviews, an analysis of more than 40 hours of dispatch recordings, public records and time-stamped photos and videos, it details the chaotic, heart-pounding and disorganized exodus of Jan. 7.

[See Palisades, A10]

Photo illustration by JIM COOKE Los Angeles Times;  
Photos courtesy of TY DUFFY, DAVID HANSEN, GEOFF GRANT, LEE MINTZ

## As Altadena waited, fire officials faced chaos

Command post scrambled to respond to the erratic fury of Eaton blaze

BY TERRY CASTLEMAN  
AND GRACE TOOHEY

In just a few hours, hurricane-force winds would

fire’s chaotic movement. On the streets of Altadena,

emergency officials established a mobile command

## TARIFFS HEIGHTEN TRADE WORRIES

Trump’s sweeping levies on goods from Mexico, Canada and China raise fears about consumer costs.

BY KATE LINTHICUM  
AND DON LEE

WASHINGTON — President Trump slapped sweeping tariffs on goods from Mexico, Canada and China on Saturday, sending shock waves through the global supply chain and sparking fears of a disruptive trade war that could dramatically raise costs for U.S. consumers.

Trump signed executive orders placing duties of 25% on imports from Mexico and Canada, except for a 10% rate on Canadian energy products. He imposed a 10% tax on all imports from China.

The White House said the tariffs would go into effect Tuesday and could be raised if the targeted countries retaliate with tariffs of their own, as they have threatened.

In a post on Truth Social, the president said he was taxing imports from those countries because he blames them for the flow of undocumented immigrants



**A FIREFIGHTER** rushes to put water on a portion of the Palisades fire along West Sunset Boulevard. Streets in Pacific Palisades were gridlocked at least 40 minutes before the first widespread evacuation order.



**A FIREFIGHTER** finds a place to battle the fire on Pacific Coast Highway.

'It's 100% in alignment with the wind. We have the potential for structures being threatened in the next 20 minutes.'

— BRANDON RUEDY, L.A. Fire Department captain

# Warnings were inadequate



Palisades Community Council has repeatedly warned lawmakers and planning departments that strangled evacuation routes are a "serious risk to lives and public safety."

Development is "a political thing," a fire chief told the residents council in 2016. He went on to say Palisades residents should stay put during an emergency once fire engines arrive, because evacuees on the roads would only "com-

'I definitely think L.A. dropped the ball. I don't think we were prepared. Nobody told us where to go. It was chaos.'

— LEE MINTZ, a real estate agent who was planning to show a 7,200-square-foot mansion when the fire broke out



**A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY** directs a homeless woman to evacuate from the area of Pacific Coast Highway and Topanga Canyon Boulevard as flames rage along the hillside behind them amid the chaos of the Palisades fire.



**A BUILDING** is threatened by the fire. More than 5,400 homes were threatened.

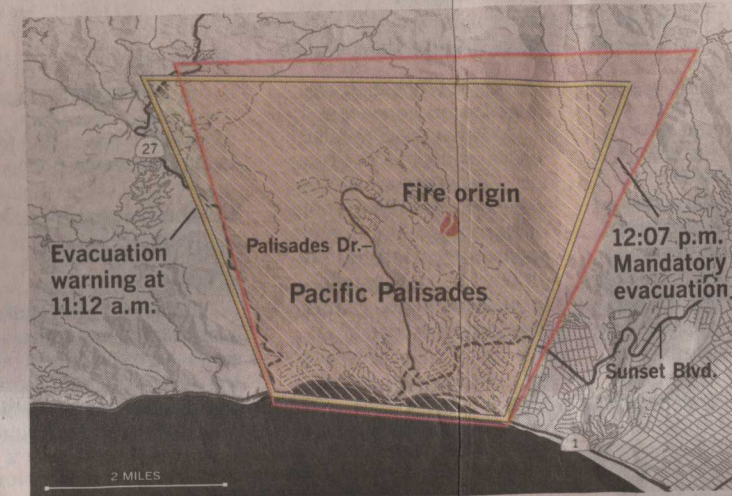
who 50 years ago battled environmentalists and urban planners to terrace these steep bluffs.

Before he reaches West Sunset, the way is blocked. Duffy guesses there are more than 100 cars in the jam. Flames creep down the hill on the left, then fire emerges from dark smoke on the right. The burning husks of palm trees cascade toward his car. Duffy sees panicked drivers cross into oncoming traffic. Others jump out of their cars.

Duffy returns home. "It's terrible down there," he tells his parents. "You can't evacuate, even if you want to."

He wonders if helicopters will have to rescue them.

**11:25 a.m.** The incident command post radios to Metro that it is time now to send another alert. But he asks for an evacuation "warning," the same notification that was issued 14 minutes earlier.



Kelli Swartz calls her husband. There's a palm tree in front of her on fire. She thinks she should get out of her car.

He tells her that's crazy. Minutes later, firefighters and police officers wading through this sea of stalled cars tell motorists to abandon them.

"Vehicles burning," a dispatcher reports. An officer knocks on the window of David Swartz's Audi. "Get out of the car," the officer tells him.

Swartz would like to pull over, but cars are sandwiched too tight. The family has to leave their two cars in the middle of West Sunset. With large duffel bags over their shoulders, they walk toward the ocean.

**1:40 p.m.** Redondo Beach Fire Department Capt. Kenny Campos' first thought when he sees people walking down West Sunset is "that's not

fighters front m. Airo tured t routes hoods City empha first an lives, ations. Gov just to ers tha many line. "T not ev the wa seriou portat evacu Bu som a impas quest

GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times  
West Sunset Boulevard.  
spread evacuation order.

for structures

L.A. Fire Department captain

uate

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er the 1978 firestorm  
canyon, burning 30  
ws accounts and cam-  
tribution records show  
sing developers used in-  
th state lawmakers and  
ity Council to negotiate  
is to growth limits.  
ment is "a political  
re chief told the resi-  
cil in 2016. He went on  
ides residents should  
ring an emergency once  
s arrive, because evacu-  
roads would only "com-  
the official plan.  
ree roads that lead down  
on — Palisades Drive,  
Lane and Bienvenida  
— dump onto the same  
d commercial strip, West  
Boulevard. From there  
nnels onto Pacific Coast

traffic officer in 2023 told  
council that the bot-  
ds are so congested the  
P-  
partment can't run speed  
in them. But, minutes show,  
ured the board that in the  
f evacuation, motorcycle of-  
would be used in great num-  
o direct people out in the  
manner they can to avoid  
snarls."  
o motorcycle escorts for flee-  
sidents are identified in the  
ades fire.

disaster planning software de-  
ped at Old Dominion Uni-  
ty analyzes roads, popula-  
and traffic patterns to esti-  
the time needed to get people  
fety in a disaster — whether a  
-away hurricane or racing  
fire.

The program's calculated evac-  
on time for Palisades High-  
is five hours and 10 minutes.  
t is with no fire cutting across  
routes and half the main roads  
verted to one-way flow.

those in the Palisades on Jan. 7  
e less than an hour before evac-  
on routes become impassable.

4 a.m.  
s Wineberg and Jimenez drive  
n Palisades Drive, flames are  
ble on the steep slopes.  
at the bottom of the canyon,  
fic has come to a stop. Except  
a seldom-used emergency ac-  
road, this is the only way out.  
Vineberg worries how quickly  
fire will run toward them. He  
ts out of the canyon. He sees no  
managing the traffic.  
He tells Jimenez to cross the  
ian into nearly empty on-  
ing lanes. They speed through,  
ting the worst of the gridlock  
ere merging back as they ap-  
ach West Sunset and escape  
PCH.

About 10 minutes behind  
eberg and Jimenez, Ty Duffy  
ds down Palisades Drive. He  
ts to be able to tell his parents if  
safe to evacuate their house on  
western side of Chastain Park-  
— named after the developer



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

**A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY** directs a homeless woman to evacuate from the area of Pacific Coast Highway and Topanga Canyon Boulevard as flames rage along the hillside behind them amid the chaos of the Palisades fire.



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

**A BUILDING** is threatened on Sunset Boulevard. More than 5,400 homes were destroyed in the blaze.

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mentalists and urban planners to  
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11:25 a.m.

The incident command post radios  
to Metro that it is time now to  
send another alert. But he asks for  
an evacuation "warning," the same  
notification that was issued 14 min-  
utes earlier.

Dispatch is confused.  
"Confirming you want an order  
and not a warning. Correct?"

"Stand by," the command post  
replies.

While the request is pending, a  
firefighter jumps in: "We can use  
some more resources here." Houses  
on Charming, Turquesa and  
Lachman lanes are on fire.

Four minutes pass, and then  
the assistant fire chief from the de-  
partment's Valley bureau — at the  
moment second in command on  
the Palisades fire — comes on the  
radio.

"We're gonna need an evacua-  
tion order, all the way to PCH."

A fire crew on the ridge makes  
the same request.

"You've got gridlock on Pali-  
sades Drive," someone in Engine 71  
says. "People are driving down  
both sides."

"I recommend getting a com-  
pany over to Sunset all the way to  
the Getty Villa and start thinking  
about evacs," another unit says  
seconds later.

A third unidentified voice  
comes on the radio: "Metro from  
Palisades IC, we need evacuation."

After disaster alerts were bun-  
gled in the 2017 La Tuna fire — then  
the worst to strike L.A. in half a  
century — the city centralized its  
warning system. Evacuation or-  
ders start from those on the  
ground, move up the chain to the  
fire department's dispatch center,  
and are then relayed to the city  
emergency operations hub.

In this instance, that isn't hap-  
pening.

A Metro dispatcher radios inci-  
dent command to let it know an-  
other fire boss is requesting evacua-  
tions. He is told to take the matter  
off the air.

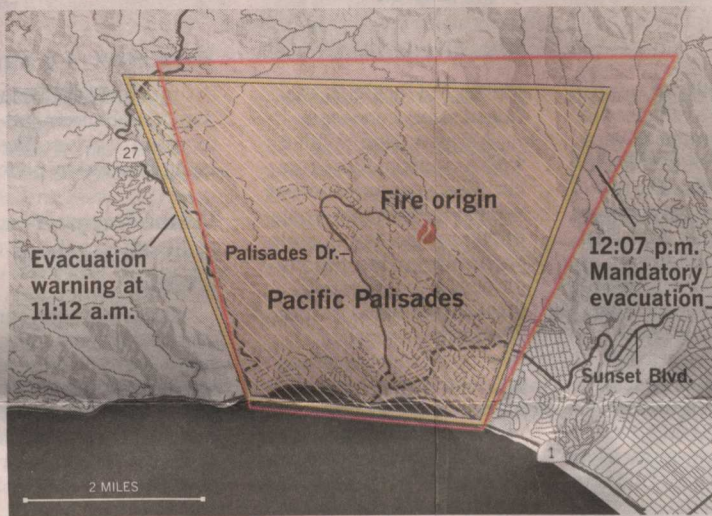
"Copy," comes the reply. "Can  
you have the [Metropolitan Fire  
Communications center] call  
Command 51 on the cellphone?"

11:41 a.m.

Not only can't Palisades resi-  
dents leave, but some firefighters  
can't get in. Frustrated, they radio  
for help.

The LAFD turns to the Police  
Department. The city's emergency  
plan states that "LAPD is the lead  
agency for conducting evacua-  
tions." That includes preventing  
gridlock like that now occurring  
across the fire disaster area.

The LAPD is sending in wave af-  
ter wave of units. Its officers are



California Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Fire  
Integrated Real-Time Intelligence System Program, Overture Maps Foundation, U.S. census, USGS  
VANESSA MARTÍNEZ Los Angeles Times

still setting up the first traffic con-  
trol posts on West Sunset even as  
Highlands residents hit road-  
blocks far before reaching that  
street.

Flames encroach on Palisades  
Drive, and fire command asks for  
police help in shutting down that  
evacuation route. To the east, the  
cars at the tail end of a mile-long  
jam on Bienvenida Avenue are ex-  
posed to encroaching fire.

Needing to empty Bienvenida,  
first responders shut down parts of  
West Sunset, worsening the grid-  
lock in other areas.

11:54 a.m.

Residents in Sunset Mesa, just  
west of Pacific Palisades along the  
coastal evacuation route, receive  
an emergency order from L.A.  
County fire officials to leave. It is  
the first evacuation order for the  
fire, but is not directed at Palisades  
residents.

City and county fire depart-  
ments are now running a joint com-  
mand, but their cooperation on  
evacuation orders is unclear. (The  
L.A. County emergency operations  
center said later that it coordi-  
nated with Los Angeles city offi-  
cials on evacuations, but would not  
provide more information, saying  
the matter is under investigation.)

A firefighter asks on the radio  
what he should do about the peo-  
ple stuck in their cars on Palisades  
Drive.

"The homeowners are saying  
they're unable to access any exit  
routes. There's fire on both sides of  
the road on Palisades," he says in a  
muffled voice. "You need to think  
about with evac if they need to go  
north or how we're going to shelter  
in place in this bowl."

Kelli Swartz calls her husband.  
There's a palm tree in front of her  
on fire. She thinks she should get  
out of her car.

He tells her that's crazy.

Minutes later, firefighters and  
police officers wading through this  
sea of stalled cars tell motorists to  
abandon them.

"Vehicles burning," a dis-  
patcher reports.

An officer knocks on the win-  
dow of David Swartz's Audi. "Get  
out of the car," the officer tells him.

Swartz would like to pull over,  
but cars are sandwiched too tight.  
The family has to leave their two  
cars in the middle of West Sunset.  
With large duffel bags over their  
shoulders, they walk toward the  
ocean.

1:40 p.m.

Redondo Beach Fire Depart-  
ment Capt. Kenny Campos' first  
thought when he sees people walk-  
ing down West Sunset is "that's not  
normal."

His own engine is blocked by  
the abandoned cars. Campos  
heads up West Sunset. People still  
stuck in their cars yell to him. What  
should they do?

"Just shelter in your car," he  
says. "We'll protect you."

The engine's hoses litter West  
Sunset as its crew tackles flames  
creeping toward the road.

2:03 p.m.

Lee Mintz, the real estate agent  
who was showing a \$5.8-million  
home, has traveled less than a  
third of a mile on West Sunset in  
two hours. She inches past the Self-  
Realization Fellowship as smoke  
thickens.

A lone firefighter holding an ax  
walks between lines of cars. Mintz  
asks what's happening. The road is  
blocked. "Wow," she says on a vi-  
deo, her voice full of dread as she  
makes a U-turn, "there's no place to  
go." She resorts to driving  
through parking lots to find her  
own way out.

"Hey, be advised," an L.A.  
County engine radios to incident  
commanders. "Sunset Boulevard  
is [im]passable due to approxi-  
mately 100 abandoned vehicles in  
the road."

The operations command  
doesn't catch the size of the prob-  
lem. Twenty vehicles?

"One-zero-zero abandoned ve-  
hicles," the county engine corrects.  
"Sunset is completely impassable."  
He radios back a few minutes  
later.

"For those vehicles, what do you  
need to get them moved? ... Can we  
use just heavy equipment to move  
them?"

"Affirmative. We need heavy  
equipment to move A LOT of vehi-  
cles," he says. "No keys, although  
we do have fobs."

An earthmoving dozer used to  
cut fire lines now pushes aside  
abandoned cars, to the sound of  
screeching metal. People's belong-  
ings are visible through crushed  
windows. A dog bed rests on a seat.  
The occupants are all gone.

First responders also clear a  
path through the abandoned cars  
on Palisades Drive, allowing fire  
engines up the canyon and permit-  
ting police to escort convoys of resi-  
dents down the bluff, past still-  
burning cars.

3:37 p.m.

A burning hill and a line of fire-

fighters set the stage for a beach-  
front media briefing.

Aircraft heat sensors have cap-  
tured the fire's portrait, a diagonal  
slash that cuts through evacuation  
routes and impinges on neighbor-  
hoods from multiple directions.

City Fire Chief Kristen Crowley  
emphasizes that the department's  
first and primary mission is saving  
lives, "beginning with evacua-  
tions."

Gov. Gavin Newsom, having  
just toured the scene, tells report-  
ers that he was unsettled to see so  
many people still behind the fire  
line. "The fact that people were still  
not evacuated, still did not heed  
the warning ... is a reminder of how  
serious this moment is and how im-  
portant it is you listen to these  
evacuation orders," he says.

But when a reporter asks New-  
som about the bulldozed cars and  
impassable roads, he defers the  
question to Crowley.

"People did evacuate," Crowley  
says. "It was slow to evacuate.  
From what I have been briefed on is  
that the evacuations were slow.  
But they did occur."

## Epilogue

Ty Duffy leaves Palisades High-  
lands as night falls, driving past the  
wreckage of bulldozed cars and a  
van still burning.

His father follows hours later  
and is told the main road is now  
blocked by fire, leaving only an un-  
developed spur between devel-  
opments, Fire Road, that also tra-  
verses the blaze's path.

At the direction of city fire offi-  
cials, those at the senior living cen-  
ter on top of the ridge have re-  
mained until 9 p.m. Then, when the  
canyon wildfire has spilled out  
onto the dense coast and become  
an urban firestorm, the depart-  
ment is now tasked to provide am-  
bulance vans and escorts for 64  
people, many in wheelchairs and  
some on oxygen.

Jeremy Wineberg watches the  
feed from his home security cam-  
eras as flames light up the kitchen  
window. In the morning, a neigh-  
bor shares pictures of the street.  
One single house is in rubble, still  
burning. It is his.

The home Lee Mintz was sched-  
uled to show also has burned down.  
"Everyone was out for themselves,"  
she says days later. "There was so  
much paranoia. You were stuck  
and you didn't have anywhere to  
go. ... I definitely think L.A.  
dropped the ball. I don't think we  
were prepared. Nobody told us  
where to go. It was chaos."

David and Kelli Swartz are  
among the lucky. Their house sur-  
vived, but there is smoke damage.  
They plan to return when it's safe  
to do so.

In response to questions about  
the delay in sending evacuation or-  
ders, the Los Angeles city emer-  
gency management department  
said it issued every alert the city  
Fire Department requested.

The LAFD declined to respond.

Times staff writer Noah Haggerty  
contributed to this report.

Scan this code with  
your phone to  
watch a video on  
how the harrowing  
evacuation of the  
Pacific Palisades unfolded.



**A RESIDENCE** gives a firefighter a place to battle flames at a house next door on Pacific Coast Highway.

WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times



**A FIREFIGHTER** rushes to put water on a portion of the Palisades fire along West Sunset Boulevard. Streets in Pacific Palisades were gridlocked at least 40 minutes before the first widespread evacuation order.

GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

'It's 100% in alignment with the wind. We have the potential for structures being threatened in the next 20 minutes.'

— BRANDON RUEDY, L.A. Fire Department captain

# Years of warnings were inadequate

[Palisades, from A1]

## 'A really big head of steam'

10:25 a.m.

A fire watch camera on Green Peak captures the first flare and smoke of a fire a mile away. It's near a local hangout dubbed Skull Rock on the popular Temescal Ridge Trail, where a New Year's Day brush fire had charred eight acres but damaged no homes.

10:27 a.m.

A brisk Santa Ana wind feeds the new brush fire. Alarm spreads within Palisades Highlands, a string of developments perched between the coast and the protected wilds of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Residents spread the news through a private WhatsApp group.

"Fire," one types. "Across the hills on Piedra Morada."

"I see it," another responds.

"New?" the first asks.

A resident attaches a photo. It shows smoke rising near the area burned on New Year's Day.

"Same spot!!"

10:29 a.m.

A young man drinking morning tea is the first to call 911 after his sister, leaning down to fill his cup, spots the fire from the window of their home on Piedra Morada Drive.

10:34 a.m.

As engines head to the Palisades fire, it's quickly clear that more are needed. A city firefighter racing toward the scene from Station 69 in the Palisades requests 10 more engines, and a moment later doubles that.

"I've ordered 20 additional engine companies," dispatch confirms from the Metropolitan Fire Communications center downtown.

"Let me know what streets need to be protected and we'll get the structure defense going as well," responds a firefighter in Engine 69.

After eight months without significant rain and amid gusting Santa Ana winds, L.A. is on fire alert.

A firefighter in another engine can see thick smoke coming off Temescal Ridge, angling over the canyon below.

"OK, this thing's got a really big head of steam," he radios. "We have significant houses, significant brush in that area."

10:37 a.m.

Jeremy Wineberg, a music executive who has also noticed the smoke, rushes barefoot out his front door on Calle Jermaine, his black robe closed over his underwear.

"Jesus Christ! F—!" he yells.

He turns to his boyfriend, Zander Jimenez, who has just come to the door. "Oh my God, babe, it's so bad! We got to go. Let's pack our stuff."

Wineberg texts his neighbors:



California Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection, Fire Integrated Real-Time Intelligence System Program, Overture Maps Foundation, U.S. Census, USGS

VANESSA MARTÍNEZ Los Angeles Times

"We have to evacuate now."

10:48 a.m.

Los Angeles Fire Department Capt. Brandon Ruedy watches as wind drives flames toward thick vegetation.

The 25-year department veteran knows fire behavior and reckons this one will make a good run. Looking at this 10-acre blaze, Ruedy does the math.

"It's 100% in alignment with the wind," he radios in a terse, clipped voice. "This has the potential for 200-plus acres in the next 20 minutes."

"We have the potential for structures being threatened in the next 20 minutes."

## This is a fire they must flee

11:10 a.m.

David and Kelli Swartz watch in disbelief as smoke envelops their back deck and continues toward the beach. Sirens and horns echo in Santa Ynez Canyon behind their home.

In 11 years living there, the Swartz family has never had to evacuate. Not for the fire early on New Year's Day, the 2021 Palisades fire, the 2019 Getty and Palisades fires, the 2018 Woolsey fire. Before they moved here, the Palisades were hit by the 1978 Mandeville Canyon fire, part of a firestorm that razed so many homes that The Times called it "Black Monday." Their house is two blocks from the edge of the 1938 wildfire that gutted this and other canyons.

For the first time, the Swartzes realize, this is a fire they must flee.

11:11 a.m.

At his kitchen island, Wineberg

doubles over on a stool, hands raking his hair. From the den, a television blares a newscast tracking the fire. It has "grown substantially" beyond the 20 acres last reported by fire officials.

"I'm about to faint," Wineberg says. "My heart rate is at 165."

They discuss which cars to drive out of the bluff-top neighborhood, aptly named The Summit. It is one of the highest housing tracts in Palisades Highlands, the chain of developments that started cutting into wild Santa Ynez Canyon in the 1970s.

Wineberg knows he wants to take his electric Mercedes. They quickly rule out also taking the Tesla — it's charged only to 37%. Wineberg wants to move his prized 1967 Mustang down the hill, saying "this whole area isn't going to burn."

The first item on an unfinished evacuation list he began a month ago is the red Mustang.

He checks the screen on his smartwatch.

"They haven't told us to leave yet," he says. But panic is setting in.

"Snap out of it!" Jimenez urges.

Within seven minutes, they load Wineberg's English bulldogs, Winnie and James, some electronics and a very few other items into the Mercedes. As they back out of the drive, the Mustang remains in the garage. The Tesla is plugged into its charger.

And in and around the empty home, 13 security cameras are recording.

11:12 a.m.

The city's Emergency Operations Center uses the federal wireless emergency alert system — WEA — to ping cellphones in a 25-square-mile area in and around the Palisades with an evacuation

warning.

A minute later, the city's emergency operations center launches robocalls and hits social media sites with an identical message: "Those near the Palisades fire should get set for a potential evacuation."

There's no immediate account of how many of those calls get through or are noticed. Many residents are already packing cars. They are a step ahead of the Palisades Incident Command — the central nerve center set up at the bottom of the canyon on Palisades Drive. This command post will move repeatedly as the flames advance, but for now the spot offers a clear view of what's happening on the slopes.

City emergency planning documents call for the Los Angeles Police Department to take charge of disaster evacuations. It is up to the police agency to alert residents — drive up and down streets with loudspeakers or bang on doors if necessary — and to route traffic and convert congested roads to one-way flow in order to keep people moving.

But in the face of a racing brush fire, when residents are within 30 minutes of danger, the responsibility falls to the Fire Department.

Forty-seven minutes after the Palisades fire has started, and nine minutes after warning residents they might have to leave, the command post tells dispatchers downtown that there are no orders to leave: "We are not evacuating residents at this time. We are in the process of putting that piece together."

## The politics of development

Since the 1970s, the Pacific Palisades

sades Community Council has repeatedly warned lawmakers and planning departments that strangled evacuation routes are a "serious risk to lives and public safety."

Even after the 1978 firestorm swept this canyon, burning 30 homes, news accounts and campaign contribution records show that housing developers used influence with state lawmakers and the L.A. City Council to negotiate exemptions to growth limits.

Development is "a political thing," a fire chief told the residents council in 2016. He went on to say Palisades residents should stay put during an emergency once fire engines arrive, because evacuees on the roads would only "compromise" the official plan.

The three roads that lead down the canyon — Palisades Drive, Lachman Lane and Bienvenida Avenue — dump onto the same congested commercial strip, West Sunset Boulevard. From there traffic funnels onto Pacific Coast Highway.

A city traffic officer in 2023 told the residents council that the bottom roads are so congested the Police Department can't run speed traps on them. But, minutes show, she "assured the board that in the event of evacuation, motorcycle officers would be used in great numbers to direct people out in the safest manner they can to avoid traffic snarls."

No motorcycle escorts for fleeing residents are identified in the Palisades fire.

Disaster planning software developed at Old Dominion University analyzes roads, populations and traffic patterns to estimate the time needed to get people to safety in a disaster — whether a days-away hurricane or racing wildfire.

The program's calculated evacuation time for Palisades Highlands is five hours and 10 minutes. That is with no fire cutting across exit routes and half the main roads converted to one-way flow.

Those in the Palisades on Jan. 7 have less than an hour before evacuation routes become impassable.

11:24 a.m.

As Wineberg and Jimenez drive down Palisades Drive, flames are visible on the steep slopes.

At the bottom of the canyon, traffic has come to a stop. Except for a seldom-used emergency access road, this is the only way out.

Wineberg worries how quickly the fire will run toward them. He wants out of the canyon. He sees no one managing the traffic.

He tells Jimenez to cross the median into nearly empty oncoming lanes. They speed through, skirting the worst of the gridlock before merging back as they approach West Sunset and escape onto PCH.

About 10 minutes behind Wineberg and Jimenez, Ty Duffy heads down Palisades Drive. He wants to be able to tell his parents if it is safe to evacuate their house on the western side of Chastain Parkway — named after the developer

**A SHERIFF'S D**  
Topanga Canyon I

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11:25 a.m.

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utes earlier.

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11:41 a.m.

Not only can't Pal  
dents leave, but some  
can't get in. Frustrated  
for help.

The LAFD turns to  
Department. The city's  
plan states that "LAPD  
agency for conducti  
ations." That includes  
gridlock like that now  
across the fire disaster

The LAPD is sending  
ter wave of units. Its c